



ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES

Ardita Dylgjeri¹

PhD candidate, "Aleksander Xhuvani" University,
Elbasan, Albania

Abstract:

Speech Acts theories have been a considerable revolution in the developments of pragmatics as a discipline. However, pragmatics cannot be fully studied without taking in consideration discourse analysis, since they are closely linked with each other. Undoubtedly, political discourse has been a major domain of language use that has attracted the interests of researchers for a long while. This is because political discourse is a complex human activity that deserves critical study, particularly because of its central place in the organization and management of society. This study investigates the role of language in the communication and interpretation of intentions by examining a selected political speech as some piece of discourse with specific goals.

Since the politician's speech is mainly concerned with persuading or making the others believe what you are saying, the Speech Acts play the most important role. It presents and documents some of the significant illocutionary acts that convey the intentions of speakers in political speeches. Firstly, we will provide the theoretical explanation of the two main theories concerning Speech acts, Austin and Searle's ones. Secondly, we will try to analyze the first Edi Rama's victorious political speech after the general elections held in Albania in June 2013 concerning Speech Acts and their categorizations.

Keywords: speech, acts, analysis, political discourse, illocutionary force

1. Introduction

Pragmatics is seen as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations of necessity, this would take cognizance of the message being communicated

¹ Correspondence: email arditadylgjeri@live.com

or the speech act being performed; the participants involved; their intention, knowledge of the world and the impact of these on their interactions; what they have taken for granted as part of the context; the deductions they make on the basis of the context; what is implied by what is said or left unsaid; etc. (Leech, 1983, p. 20; Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 146; Thomas, 1995, p. 7)

Undoubtedly, political discourse has been a major domain of language use that has attracted the interests of researchers for a long while. This is because political discourse is a complex human activity that deserves critical study particularly because of its central place in the organization and management of society. Political language deals with the use of power to organize people's mind and opinion. It is an instrument used to control the society in general. Political speech can be seen as a means of establishing and maintaining social relationships, expressing feelings, and selling ideas, policies, and political projects in any society. In pragmatics one of the most important phenomenon is Speech Act Theory; Speech Acts, the propositions/locutions performed often depend on the speaker's intention and the context in which the propositions are uttered.

The paper reveals the effectiveness of discourse tact in ensuring that speech acts force is achieved in discourse. It presents a speech acts analysis of Edi Rama's speech given in front of the Albanian people after winning the general elections of 2013. It tries to find the meaning of utterances based on the context of the speaker: the enthusiasm of his and the electorate, the hopefulness and encouragement for crucial expected changes in the way Albania would be governed in the following four years period.

2. Political Discourse

The structures of political discourse are seldom exclusive, but typical and effective discourse in political contexts, but certainly, they do have preferred structures and strategies that are functional in the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts. Political discourse is not only about stating public propositions. It is about politics. It is about doing things with words. Words are used to affect the political body. Lexical items not only may be selected because of official criteria of decorum, but also because they effectively emphasize political attitudes and opinions, manipulate public opinion, manufacture political consent, or legitimate political power.

Many studies of political discourse deal with the language of professional politicians and political institutions, some of which are discourse-analytical (Chilton, 2004, p. 14). Political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, viz., politicians. Politicians in this sense are the group of people who are being paid for their (political) activities, and who are being elected or appointed as the central players in the politics.

Therefore, we should also include the various recipients in political communicative events, such as the public, the people, and citizens. All these groups and individuals, as well as their organizations and institutions, may take part in the political process, and many of them are actively involved in political discourse (van Dijk, 1997, p. 13).

The organization of public life around style-oriented service and consumer activities has also shaped conceptions of political representations. It may therefore not come as a surprise that politicians themselves have adopted a more personalized rhetoric of choice and life style values to communicate their political messages to citizens (Simpson & Andrea, 2010, pp. 42-43).

A political speech is not necessarily a success because of a correctness of truth; rather it may be a matter of presenting arguments (Beard, 2000, p. 18). A political speech serves as a text, as an output and as a process which may be spoken or written. Most politicians are unaware of the fact that there is a link between what is said, what is meant, and the action conveyed by what is said. In the study of political speeches, one major theory that has been affective and adequate for analysis is the speech act theory.

3. Speech Acts Theories

People perform various actions through the use of words and when utterances are made, a particular act is performed; this is called Speech act. The Speech Acts theory is also described as "How to Do Things with Words Theory" since it has its roots in the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). They are able to provide a shift from constative notion to performative notion in the empirical verifiability of signs; that is, the truthfulness of signs to what an expression does when it is uttered.

Speech acts according to Austin (1962) fall into three classes, which are: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act is an act of saying something; that is, the act of producing an utterance. Illocutionary acts are the core of any theory of speech acts. The perlocutionary act is the effect or influence on the feelings, thoughts or actions of the listener/hearer unlike locutionary acts. Perlocutionary acts could be inspiring, persuading, consoling, promising, encouraging etc. It brings about an effect upon the beliefs, attitudes or behaviours of the addressee. It is in consonance with this that Levinson (1981) describes perlocutionary act as the intended or unintended consequences of the speaker's utterance.

Searle (1969) improves on Austin's (1962) Speech Act theory by distinguishing between two types of speech acts: Direct and Indirect Speech Acts. Searle (1969) categorizes the illocutionary act into five classes:

1. Assertives: These are statements that describe a state of affairs in the world which could be true or false. They commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition.
2. Directives: These are statements that compel or make another person's action fit the propositional element. It is usually used to give order thereby causing the hearer to take a particular action, request, command or advice.
3. Commissive: These statements commit the speaker to certain future action. It could be in the form of a promise.
4. Expressives: The purpose of expressive statements is to express sincerity of the speech act like excuses and sympathy.
5. Declaratives: These statements are used to say something and make it so, such as pronouncing someone guilty and declaring a war.

The application of the Speech Act theory in the analysis will allow in-depth research into the linguistic features that have been explored by the speaker to inculcate meaning into the formal linguistic properties of the selected speech.

4. Speech Acts Analysis of Edi Rama's First Victory Speech

The following propositions analyzed are taken from the first speech that Edi Rama gave in front of the Albanian people after winning the elections in 2013 (Rama, 2013).

1. Locution: *"From today onwards, we will be with you and for you, until this great responsibility is ours."*

Illocutionary act: Assertive (reporting).

Expected Perlocutionary effect: Hopefulness.

2. Locution: *"I love this country, that's why I fought for it with all possible means. My heart knows how infinite are the possibilities to make this country reborn, and I will struggle hard to accomplish these possibilities."*

Illocutionary act: Assertive (stating).

Perlocutionary effect: Confidence.

3. Locution: *"Albanian families deserve better educational, medical and judicial systems to govern this country. So let us divide all these infinite challenges, aspirations and possibilities to recover the economy through honest taxation and free competition."*

Illocutionary act: Commissive (promising).

Perlocutionary effect: Encouragement and hopefulness.

4. Locution: *"We will start working hard together to prove ourselves and not only, to prove all the world that we have enough talent, values and determination to fulfill the last will of our predecessors and the aspirations of our children."*

Illocutionary act: Commissive (promising).

Perlocutionary act: Happiness and hopefulness.

5. Locution: *"It must be the freedom, not its absence, the right way to govern this country, the deserved merit, not its absence, the basis on which everybody and every enterprise should be evaluated in this country."*

Illocutionary act: Commissive (offering and promising).

Perlocutionary act: Encouragement and hopefulness.

6. Locution: *"We will govern Albania, but neither I nor the representatives that you have appointed cannot bring renaissance alone to Albania. I want you, the people of this country, to join the Renaissance squad."*

Illocutionary act: Directive (appealing).

Perlocutionary effect: Inspiring.

7. Locution: *"I know that as Abraham Lincoln has stated, "no government can please everybody`s aspirations and feelings".*

Illocutionary act: Assertive (stating).

Perlocutionary act: Loss of confidence.

9. Locution: *"...you believed in us because we made the most of ourselves to provide a project that will change Albania, a new alliance for the European Albania that demonstrated to the whole world we put Albania the first place, beyond our personal interests and Parties."*

Illocutionary act: Commissive (offering).

Perlocutionary effect: Hopefulness and happiness.

10. Locution: *"...our people unanimously, from Shkoder to Vlore gave us this important historical opportunity and we will struggle hard to separate this country once and forever from the ancient divisions of yesterday."*

Illocutionary act: Commissive (promising).

Perlocutionary effect: Hopefulness and excitement

11. Locution: *"We accept the opportunity that you, the noblest Albanian people gave us by being entirely humble to each you."*

Illocutionary act: Assertive (stating).

Perlocutionary effect: Excitement.

12. Locution: *"Being here, in front of you, watching the purple flags of victory waving everywhere in Albania, from Gjirokaster to Kukes, I cannot hide the fact I feel eternally thankful and enthusiastic at the same time."*

Illocutionary act: Expressive (thanking).

Perlocutionary effect: Cheerfulness and happiness.

13. Locution: *"...this deserved enthusiasm is not what will bring new work places for the young people, not even better medical services, this victory is not the arrival point, it is just the starting point."*

Illocutionary act: Directive (claiming).

Perlocutionary effect: Determining and encouraging.

14. Locution: *"Until this moment, we demonstrated that we wanted Renaissance to occur, now we are left with the most crucial part, we have to work and sacrifice ourselves to make it be successfully accomplished."*

Illocutionary act: Directive (requesting, demanding).

Perlocutionary effect: Inspiring and encouragement.

15. Locution: *"Now, that the election process is over, I want to make it clear that I will serve with devotion every single Albanian, not only who voted me and my government."*

Illocutionary act: Commissive (promising).

Perlocutionary effect: Hopefulness and encouragement.

5. Findings and Conclusions

The identification of speech acts types in political speeches go a long way in ascribing meanings to the content given. In other words, the speech acts bring to the fore meaning in speeches. As observed, in the process or act of saying something; other speech acts are performed. The speech acts in a work portray the personality of the speaker. The analysis of the victorious Edi Rama speech reveals that his speech is characterized by the use of commissive speech acts, especially after a long political campaign, which filled the hearts and minds of the people with great expectations and hopes and promises for a brighter future. What is left now to him is to show enthusiasm, to be thankful, promising and encouraging the people to work harder to completely fulfill his electorate project. As a result, the biggest percentage of illocutionary acts performed is commissive acts, then assertive and expressive acts. The Speech Act Theory as a framework in the analysis of the selected speech enables us to explore the language use of this political leader.

References

1. Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Beard, A. (2000). *The language of politics*. London: Routledge.
3. Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. London, New York: Routledge.
4. Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
5. Levinson, S. C. (1981). The essential inadequacies of speech act models of dialogue. In H. Parret, J. Verschueren, & M. Sbisà (Ed.), *In Possibilities and*

- limitations of pragmatics: Proceedings of the Conference on Pragmatics, Urbino, July 8–14, 1979.* (pp. 473-492). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
6. Rama, E. (2013, June 25). *Detyra do jetë imja, pushteti do jetë juaji*. Retrieved May 05, 2016, from ps.al: <http://ps.al/new/te-reja/detyra-do-jete-imja-pushteti-do-jete-juaji/>
 7. Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 8. Simpson, P., & Andrea, M. (2010). *Language and Power*. London: Routledge.
 9. Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. London: Longman.
 10. van Dijk, T. A. (1997). What is political discourse analysis. *Belgian journal of linguistics*, 11(1), 11-52.
 11. Watson, J. R., & Hill, A. (1993). *A dictionary of communication and media studies*. London: Edward Arnold.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).